

Comparative Woman

Volume 1
Issue 1 *Spirituality*

Article 14

12-30-2018

“Seven Mothers”

Carmela Lanza
University of New Mexico at Gallup

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Recommended Citation

Lanza, Carmela (2018) “Seven Mothers,” *Comparative Woman*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 14.

DOI: [10.31390/comparativewoman.1.1.12](https://doi.org/10.31390/comparativewoman.1.1.12)

Available at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/comparativewoman/vol1/iss1/14>

Seven Mothers

"... the Matrikas are described as having inauspicious qualities and often described as dangerous. They come to play a protective role in later mythology, although some of their inauspicious and wild characteristics still persist in these accounts. Thus, they represent the prodigiously fecund aspect of nature as well as its destructive force aspects."

Wikipedia

I needed the Seven Mothers, the *Sapta Matrikas*,
when I was first carried into the house,
when I first started crying.
They would have destroyed what had fossilized into bone,
the old blood turning to volcanic rock:
"the one who is always right,"
"the one who wants what you have"
"the one who wants"
"the one who answers with a fist"
"the one who twists a story"
"the one who points a finger"
"the one who shares *malocchio*"
"the one who ignores all."

*And my mother says again and again,
it has become a family nursery rhyme:
"you started to cry and you did not stop for months.
No one could get you to stop.
We did not know what was wrong."*

If the Seven Mothers had been there,
they would have destroyed
all the ghosts trailing behind me,
ghosts of what was and what would be,
ghosts that would leave me
an orphan in a desert.

Using their weapons:
a fennel stalk, a serpent, silver coins,
a thunder bolt, volcanic ash, a noose,
spit, a sword, and a skull-bowl,
they walked the property,
hid under the small pile of rocks
near rotting vegetable plants,
hid in the corners of the "second garage,"
behind piles of newspapers and phone books,
curled in the chicken coop,

only speaking in dreams to each other,
slept under the house, breathing,
waiting for the moment.

Surround my crib so I won't
choke or burn with fever;
I call you to battle:
the boar-head mother,
the woman-lion mother.

But that never happened;
I did not know how to call out
to the Seven Mothers.
I did not know their language
as I walked around Long Island
in my polyester pants waiting
for something to happen.

I prayed to the tree at the end of the driveway,
and I made weapons from cereal boxes and glitter;
I left poems on pillows before I made my exit,
glue stuck on my fingers and all of you laughed.
I was the youngest, what did I know?

I know now the Seven Mothers
would want a sacrifice
for every word I learned,
and it would not have
ended with blood.

Carmela Delia Lanza